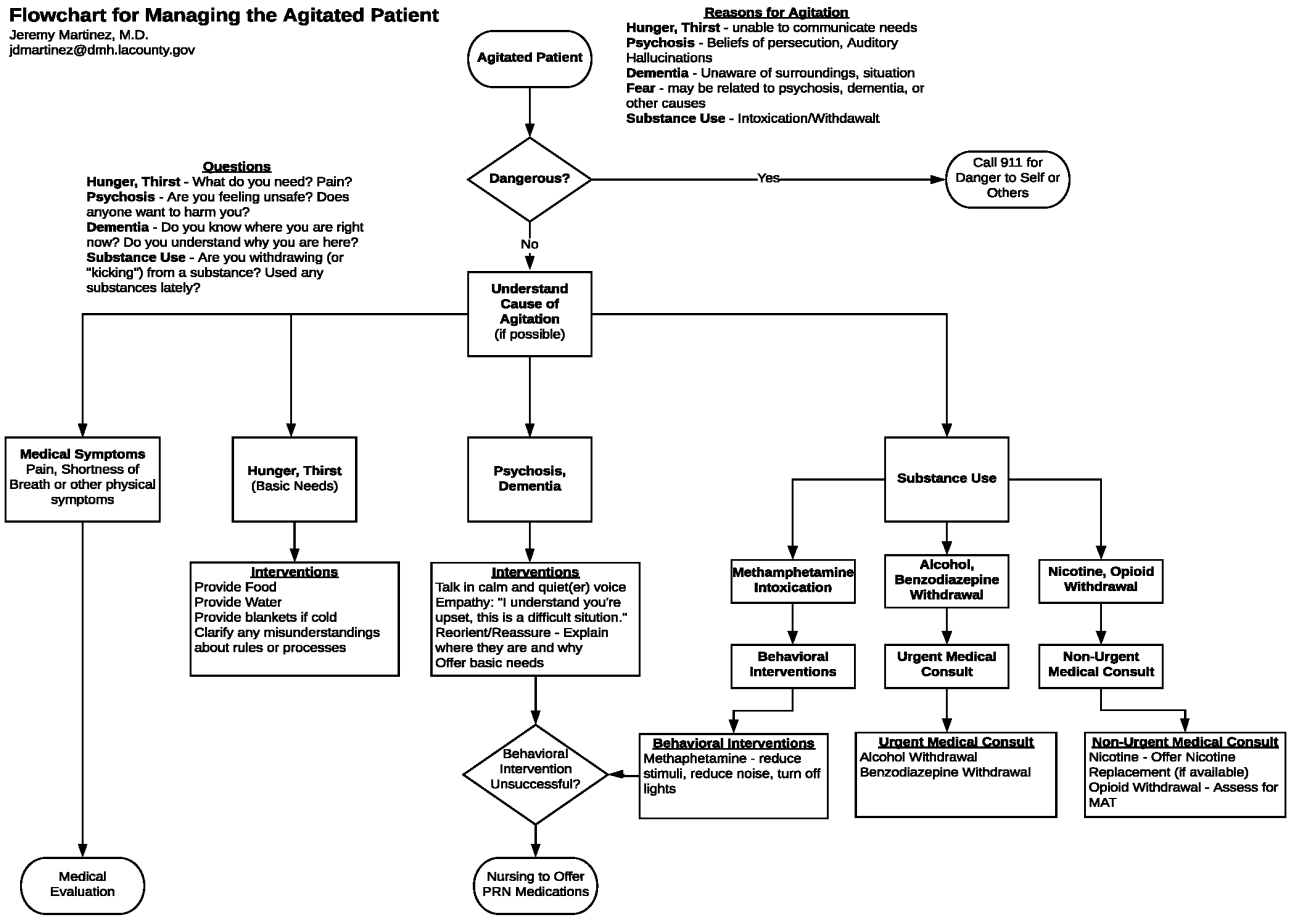
# Flowchart for Managing the Agitated Patient

Jeremy Martinez, M.D.
jdmartinez@dmh.lacounty.gov


Agitated Patient
Reasons for Agitation
Hunger, Thirst - unable to communicate needs
Psychosis - Beliefs of persecution, Auditory Hallucinations
Dementia - Unaware of surroundings, situation
Fear - may be related to psychosis, dementia, or other causes
Substance Use - Intoxication/Withdawalt
Dangerous?
Yes
Call 911 for Danger to Self or Others
No
Questions
Hunger, Thirst - What do you need? Pain?
Psychosis - Are you feeling unsafe? Does anyone want to harm you?
Dementia - Do you know where you are right now? Do you understand why you are here?
Substance Use - Are you withdrawing (or "kicking") from a substance? Used any substances lately?
Understand Cause of Agitation (if possible)
Medical Symptoms
Pain, Shortness of Breath or other physical symptoms
Hunger, Thirst
(Basic Needs)
Psychosis, Dementia
Substance Use
Interventions
Provide Food
Provide Water
Provide blankets if cold
Clarify any misunderstandings about rules or processes
Interventions
Talk in calm and quiet(er) voice
Empathy: "I understand you're upset, this is a difficult situtation."
Reorient/Reassure - Explain where they are and why
Offer basic needs
Methamphetamine Intoxication
Alcohol, Benzodiazepine Withdrawal
Nicotine, Opioid Withdrawal
Behavioral Interventions
Urgent Medical Consult
Non-Urgent Medical Consult
Behavioral Intervention Unsuccessful?
Behavioral Interventions
Methaphetamine - reduce stimuli, reduce noise, turn off lights
Urgent Medical Consult
Alcohol Withdrawal
Benzodiazepine Withdrawal
Non-Urgent Medical Consult
Nicotine - Offer Nicotine Replacement (if available)
Opioid Withdrawal - Assess for MAT
Medical Evaluation
Nursing to Offer PRN Medications